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Lucia A Keegan 02/28/2007 11:35:51 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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FOR NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR HADLEY FROM AMBASSADOR
STAPLETON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/07/2012
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [FR](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [ECON](#) [EU](#)
SUBJECT: YOUR MEETING WITH FORMER FRENCH PRESIDENT VALERY
GISCARD D'ESTAING

Classified By: Ambassador Craig Stapleton reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Steve, Thank you for agreeing to a brief meeting with former French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing. The historical perspective Giscard brings to his assessment of international developments are unmatched. I believe you will also find his views on the current French presidential election, and its likely impact on U.S.-France relations, particularly interesting.

¶2. (C) Any conversation with Giscard inevitably touches on Europe's future. As the principal drafter of the EU Constitutional treaty, Giscard has an abiding interest in salvaging as much of it as possible. He will have views on how the French election outcome will serve or impede that end. He will also likely take the opportunity to make a pitch for more visible U.S. support for a strong EU.

¶3. (C) Giscard celebrated his eighty-first birthday earlier this month. Late last year he published the third volume of his memoirs. President Chirac -- in Giscard's portrait of him in that book -- is an opportunist who has weakened France and harmed U.S.-French relations. Even so, Giscard did support Chirac's policy of keeping France out of the coalition that liberated Iraq from Saddam's regime. Giscard is concerned we're on a collision course with Iran. However, in conversations with me he has seemed complacent about the destabilizing effect of an Iranian bomb on the region, and the proliferation danger it poses.

¶4. (C) Giscard has keen observations about the leading contenders for France's presidency, center-left candidate Segolene Royal and center-right candidate Nicolas Sarkozy. Royal and Sarkozy remain strong favorites to win, on April 22, the first round of the French presidential elections. A

run-off between them, judging from current polls, is likely to be extremely close.

¶5. (C) Two other candidates have positioned themselves as "third man" alternatives to the two leaders: Centrist Francois Bayrou (the current head of the party Giscard founded in 1978), who has enjoyed a recent surge of interest and rising poll numbers, and right wing extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen, who at 78 years old, is making his last run at the Presidency. Each currently enjoys the support of about 15 percent of the electorate (about half of Royal's and Sarkozy's). Le Pen's support appears stable; Bayrou's has been growing.

¶6. (C) The electoral base and organizational strength provided by the two main parties continue to strongly favor Sarkozy's and Royal's chances. A continuing steady rise of Bayrou, and a poll-hidden reservoir of support for Le Pen could still conceivably put one or the other over the top -- but only if one of the two leading candidates should suffer an unforeseeable collapse of his or her electability.

¶7. (C) Giscard in the U.S. on a speaking tour. While in Washington he will deliver a speech at Georgetown University commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the treaty of Rome.

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